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DATA 186-73

17 October 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: [] Declassification Request

1. This is an interesting conundrum with some tricky overtones. At one level, a "damage" argument cannot plausibly be made. [] five memos are more than a decade old. Your confirmation and swearing in are events that have taken place. Furthermore, Vietnam is not at the moment a front-burner public issue; hence, Vietnam minutiae -- even minutiae also involving the Agency -- are hardly prime candidates for front-page treatment. In this context, Mr. Brownman's recommendation (or, actually, endorsement of Mr. Shackley's recommendation) is sensible and has much merit.

2. In my opinion, however, some of [] arguments cannot be ignored, even though I would not subscribe to all of his language. (Whether [] is fairly described as a "malicious malcontent" is debatable and actually beside the point.) Personally, I am worried about the precedent aspect of our authorizing the declassification of these memos, even with EA Division's recommended excisions. We do not want to be like the Bourbons of 18th century France and lose everything by being unwilling (in a changing political climate) to give up anything; but neither can we let ourselves be salami'd to death. Also, the fact that [] originally filched these documents in defiance of then (and still) existing regulations does seem to me to be pertinent and to make this case quite different from one, say, where a retired officer might write in to request declassification of old memos he had worked on which he knows still repose in Agency archives. I gag at seeing us take any action that could be

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construed as sanctifying or acquiescing in the unauthorized physical removal of classified documents from Agency premises. For this reason, my personal preference would be to disapprove request.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

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